COMPLAINT PAGE 1 OF 19

- 6. Antioch University ("Antioch") is a private non-profit university that emphasizes cultural inclusion, diversity, and social justice.
- 7. Antioch offered night classes or part-time classes to provide working students an opportunity to pursue graduate degrees.
- 8. Antioch began offering the Doctor of Psychology (PsyD) program at the Seattle campus in 2004.
- 9. The PsyD program was initially designed to be a full-time program with classes at night and on the weekends for working adults.
- 10. Originally, the PsyD program recruited minorities, people with disabilities, and other populations with historically low access to higher education opportunities as part of its social justice and diversity mission.
- 11. Antioch advertised a flexible PsyD program that could accommodate part-time adult learner students.
- 12. This advertised flexibility led prospective students to believe that they could keep working full-time while attending school.
  - 13. Antioch did not offer remedial support to non-traditional students.
- 14. In 2015, Antioch implemented a mandatory writing class for incoming students. Prior to this pilot program, students who needed academic writing support did not have an opportunity to receive direct instruction in academic writing and APA citations.
- 15. The PsyD program initially offered "tracks" or specializations in areas such as child psychology, forensic psychology, clinical psychology, adult psychology, art therapy, and health psychology to help its graduates stand out.
- 16. In 2015, Antioch stopped offering the tracks with little advance notice to its current students.

- 17. In 2015, Antioch applied for APA accreditation of the PsyD program.
- 18. In 2017, Antioch was conferred APA accreditation of the PsyD program for a period of five years.
- 19. As a result of the accreditation process, Antioch's PsyD program began to change from an inclusive and flexible program to a more traditional doctoral program.
- 20. Non-traditional students who had enrolled at Antioch with the promise of flexibility and inclusion, suddenly found themselves as targets of faculty who treated them in a disparate manner.
- 21. By 2014, Antioch was in the process of developing a formal five-year PsyD program.
- 22. Under this new program, any student who did not graduate within the newly instituted six-year standard was at high risk of dismissal.
- 23. To date, on information and belief, none of the African-American students of the class that entered the PsyD program in 2011 completed the program.

#### **B.** Dorothy Capers

- 24. Dorothy Capers is a 62-year old African American female.
- 25. Ms. Capers holds an Associate of Arts degree in Human Services issued by Bellevue Community College.
- 26. Ms. Capers has an undergraduate degree in Social Work from Western Washington University.
- 27. Ms. Capers has a Master's degree in Social Work Administration from the University of Washington.

	28.	Ms. Capers worked for the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) in
the S	tate of V	Vashington as a social worker from March 2006 until June 2014, when she resigned
her D	SHS po	sition due to the demands of the Antioch PsyD program.

- 29. Prior to enrolling at Antioch, Ms. Capers earned approximately \$60,000 per year as a social worker, with full benefits including state retirement benefits.
- 30. In September 2011, Ms. Capers enrolled in Antioch's Doctor of Psychology program.
- 31. Ms. Capers selected Antioch University, Seattle based on the advertisements that claimed Antioch would accommodate part-time adult learner students who had reached the ceiling with their master's degree.
  - 32. In response to these advertisements, Ms. Capers met with a recruitment officer.
- 33. The Antioch recruitment officer told Ms. Capers that Antioch encouraged diversity in its demographics, including students of color, first generation graduate school attendees, and "non-traditional" students over the age of 50.
- 34. The Antioch recruitment officer told Ms. Capers that Antioch recognized that minority students could be disadvantaged in higher educational programs and that it was committed to providing resources for such students, such as writing assistance and mentoring.
- 35. The recruitment officer waived the prerequisite admission fee and other admission requirements.
  - 36. Ms. Capers was admitted into the PsyD program after the application cut-off date.
- 37. In June 2014, Ms. Capers found that the program required a full-time course load, so she resigned from her full-time job at DSHS to complete her PsyD degree.
- 38. Starting in 2011 and continuing through 2017, Ms. Capers repeatedly requested help with her academic writing.

- 39. Antioch identified some individuals (primarily non-traditional minority students) who needed writing support but did not offer those students that support.
- 40. Instead, in October 2016, Antioch developed a pilot project for writing support, which consisted of referring graduate students to a private tutor who charged an hourly rate for writing support.
  - 41. Ms. Capers could not afford to pay the hourly rate for the writing support.
- 42. In the Winter quarter of the 2016-2017 school year, Ms. Capers enrolled in PSYC 722: Biological Bases of Behavior II: Clinical Medicine (Bio Bases II), a class required for graduation, taught by Dr. Dana Waters.
- 43. At this point, over six years into her doctoral education, Ms. Capers had completed 120 out of the 140 credits required for graduation.
- 44. In February 2017, Dr. Waters gave the class an assignment to write five pages reviewing an article.
- 45. Dr. Waters gave Ms. Capers a failing grade for the article review assignment in the Bio Bases II class.
- 46. Dr. Waters told Ms. Capers that she would not pass the class, because she had failed the first assignment.
- 47. Antioch University does not have an academic policy that requires professors to fail students who do not pass their first assignment.
- 48. Ms. Capers disputed the course failure as an arbitrary and capricious act based on the school's academic policies.
- 49. Ms. Capers requested a meeting to discuss the school's policies with: Dr. Waters, the Co-Chair of the PsyD program; Dr. Jude Bergkamp, Chair; and Dr. Jane Harmon-Jacobs, the Program Dean.

- 50. During this meeting, Dr. Waters accused Ms. Capers of plagiarism for the first time.
- 51. Dr. Waters' accusation of plagiarism was ostensibly in retaliation to Ms. Capers' dispute of the improper class failure.
- 52. For example, although Ms. Capers referenced the source text, Dr. Waters claimed that the following sentences were "plagiarized": "Daly Boyce and Wood (2015) posit that the traditional accounts of the health impact of ordered differences in Social Economic Status (SES) have not clearly unraveled the contribution of social position form access to material resources," and "In the article, *A Social Rank Explanation of How Money Influences Health*, Daly, Boyce and Wood (2015) argued that social position rather than material conditions, may explain the impact of money on human health."
  - 53. There was no discussion of academic policy during this meeting.
- 54. The PsyD Faculty reviewed Ms. Capers' performance at the end of the school year and determined that Ms. Capers' performance rated a "No Pass" for the 2016 2017 school year based on the "No Credit" grade and (and being charged with plagiarism) that she received in Bio Bases II.
- 55. Antioch does not have an academic policy that notifies students that a single "no credit" grade (or charge of plagiarism) in one class could result in a "No Pass" school year.
  - 56. Ms. Capers requested a meeting to discuss this "No Pass."
  - 57. Antioch affirmed the decision not to pass Ms. Capers.
  - 58. Ms. Capers re-enrolled in the Bio Bases II class for the winter 2017 2018 quarter.
  - 59. This time, Ms. Capers passed her first paper the five-page article review.

- 60. However, Dr. Waters failed Ms. Capers on the second writing assignment, a five-page article review, stating, "You did not do an adequate job applying course material from lecture, readings, or other sources."
  - 61. Antioch did not provide Ms. Capers an opportunity to re-write the second paper.
- 62. Based on this single assignment, Dr. Waters gave Ms. Capers a failing grade for the entire class.
- 63. Dr. Waters told Ms. Capers that, due to failing Bio Bases II, she would not be allowed to take the course a third time.
- 64. Because Bio Bases II is a class required for graduation, (and, according to the student handbook, students cannot earn two no-credits in a class), Antioch prohibited Ms. Capers from graduating and dismissed her from the PsyD program.
- 65. Upon information and belief, other similarly situated non-minority student(s) in the PsyD program were permitted to re-write assignments they had failed without being dismissed from the program.
- 66. At the time Antioch dismissed Ms. Capers from the PsyD program, she had accrued 120 of 140 required credits.
  - 67. Ms. Capers spent seven years pursuing her PsyD degree.
  - 68. She incurred more than \$250,000.00 in student loan debt.
  - 69. She quit her job at DSHS in reliance of completing her education.
  - 70. Ms. Capers currently is self-employed as a contract therapist.
- 71. Antioch and its recruiters led Ms. Capers to believe that paying tuition for the PsyD program was an investment in her career
- 72. Antioch provided no warning that it might suddenly alters its philosophy of inclusion and diversity.

- 73. Ms. Capers would never have resigned from her full-time job, foregoing a regular salary, if she knew that Antioch would fail to fulfill its promises to accommodate diverse and non-traditional students like herself.
  - 74. Her salary ranges between \$50,000 and \$60,000.
  - 75. She does not receive any benefits.
- 76. Despite paying Antioch over \$250,000, the Antioch education did not provide her with any advancement opportunities.
- 77. And yet, as of the date of this filing, Antioch is using Ms. Capers' visage (see below) in advertisements promoting social and economic justice, and touting balance between "work, life and school."



# **Balance Work, Life & School**



Your Experience Counts. Apply up to 90 Credits toward Your Antioch BA Degree!



Image 1 – Pictured above: Ms. Capers, the only black individual in the photo. Image is altered to protect identity of third parties.





78. Cynthia Winters is a 61-year old African-American female.

**Find Scholarship Eligibility** 

Antioch Degree!

79. Ms. Winters holds an Associate of Arts degree issued by Seattle Central Community College.

Help Advance Social, Economic &

\*\*\*

Environmental Justice with an

- 80. Ms. Winters holds a Bachelor of Arts degree issued by Western Washington University in Social and Human Services.
- 81. Ms. Winters holds a Master's degree in Social Work issued by Norfolk State University in Norfolk, Virginia.
  - 82. She has worked as a Certified Professional Guardian since August 2007.

COMPLAINT PAGE 9 OF 19

- 83. Prior to enrolling at Antioch, Ms. Winters had a full-time case load as a Certified Professional Guardian.
- 84. In September 2011, Ms. Winters enrolled in Antioch's Doctor of Psychology program.
- 85. Ms. Winters selected Antioch in Seattle, based on the advertisements that claimed Antioch's program was designed with the working adult in mind and was tailored for adult learners who wanted to pursue a higher degree.
- 86. Based on the representations of Antioch, Ms. Winters believed that a PsyD from Antioch offered her the opportunity that she had wanted for many years to pursue a doctoral degree in Clinical Psychology.
- 87. Based on the advertisements, Ms. Winters spoke with a recruitment officer for Antioch over the telephone.
- 88. The Antioch recruitment officer told Ms. Winters that Antioch would waive the prerequisite admission fee and other admission requirements in addition to extending the application deadline so that she could start right away.
  - 89. In September 2011, Ms. Winters enrolled at Antioch to attend school.
- 90. While Ms. Winters was enrolled at Antioch, she reduced her case load as a guardian to accommodate the demands of the PsyD program.
- 91. Over the course of their enrollment at Antioch, both Ms. Winters and Ms. Capers requested or suggested a class focused on academic writing.
- 92. In response to these requests, Dr. Dana Waters offered a two-day writing workshop.
  - 93. In 2015, Ms. Winters attended the writing workshop offered by Dr. Dana Waters.
  - 94. Dr. Waters told students that she was available to help them.

- 95. Ms. Winters found that Dr. Waters' claim was untrue whenever she sought Dr. Waters' help.
- 96. During the Fall 2015 quarter, Ms. Winters enrolled in a course taught by Dr. Waters called Biological Bases of Behavior I.
  - 97. Ms. Winters passed Bio Bases I.
- 98. During the Winter 2016 Quarter, Ms. Winters enrolled in Bio Bases II, also taught by Dr. Waters.
  - 99. Ms. Winters passed Bio Bases II.
- 100. Dr. Waters contacted Ms. Winters regarding her final paper and encouraged her to post the paper in Antioch's quarterly newsletter.
- 101. Ms. Winters told Dr. Waters she would consider submitting her final paper for publication.
- 102. Approximately seven days after receiving a final passing grade in Bio Bases II, Dr. Waters rescinded Ms. Winters' passing grade and evaluation, then charged Ms. Winters with plagiarism.
- 103. Dr. Waters called Ms. Winters in for a meeting to review that paper and the results of a plagiarism detection software.
  - 104. The software results showed a 21% similarity to other published papers.
- 105. Examples of sentences allegedly plagiarized include general statements such as, "Fetal lead exposure is thought to be a contributing factor of schizophrenia," and even cited sentences including, "The study showed that moderate amounts of chemicals, such as lead and mercury caused neurological damage in most adults, but only small amounts was needed to damage the developing brains while in utero; and in infants and young children (Gupta, 2008)."

- 106. On April 27, 2016, the student disciplinary committee reviewed Ms. Winters' work over the course of her education and alleged that she had "plagiarized" in her writing(s).
- 107. Ms. Winters appealed the committee's decision and continued to attend class in the hopes that her appeal would succeed and find her free of the plagiarism charges, and she could continue working to earn her degree.
- 108. On May 25, 2016, Ms. Winters received an email from Dr. Jude Bergkamp informing her that she could no longer attend class or participate in clinical training in Spring 2016.
  - 109. Dr. Bergkamp threatened to call the police if Ms. Winters returned to campus.
  - 110. Ms. Winters was hurt and humiliated by this threat by Dr. Bergkamp.
- 111. On June 9, 2016, Dr. Bergkamp officially dismissed Ms. Winters from Antioch's PsyD program.
- 112. At this point, five years into her doctoral education, Ms. Winters had completed 94.5 out of the 140 credits required for graduation.
  - 113. Ms. Winters spent five years pursuing her PsyD degree.
  - 114. She incurred over \$140,000.00 in student loan debt.
- 115. Ms. Winters believed that paying her Antioch tuition was an investment in her career, as Antioch recruiters had led her to believe.
- 116. Ms. Winters was never warned that Antioch might suddenly alter its philosophy of inclusion and diversity.
- 117. Ms. Winters would never have volunteered to reduce her workload, thereby reducing her income, if she knew Antioch would fail to fulfill its promises to accommodate diverse and nontraditional students like herself.

118. Ms. Winters is currently self-employed as a professional guardian in the same job she had before enrolling at Antioch – now with the additional burden of student loan payments.

# **COUNT I – Washington State Consumer Protection Act**

- 119. The conduct described above and throughout this Complaint took place in the State of Washington and constitutes unfair methods of competition or unfair or deceptive acts or practices in violation of §19.86.020 of the Revised Code of Washington ("RCW") and the Washington Consumer Protection Act ("CPA"), RCW 19.86.020, et seq.
- 120. The Washington CPA applies to the claims of the plaintiffs because the conduct which constitutes violations of the CPA by the Defendant occurred within Washington State.
- 121. Defendant used and employed unfair methods of competition and/or unfair or deceptive acts or practices. Such unfair methods of competition and/or unfair or deceptive acts or practices include, but are not limited to, the misrepresentation and concealment of material facts about the "flexible" nature of the PsyD program, the supports available to non-traditional minority students, and the students' rights to proceed at an individualized pace.
- 122. Defendant's misrepresentations, concealment, omissions, deceptions and conduct were likely to deceive and likely to cause misunderstanding and/or in fact caused Plaintiffs to be deceived and to misunderstand that the Antioch would provide flexibility and support to them to complete the program within individualized timelines.
- 123. Defendant intended that Plaintiffs would rely on their misrepresentations, concealment, warranties, deceptions and/or omissions.
- 124. Plaintiffs relied on Defendant's misrepresentations, warranties, deceptions, and/or omissions.
- 125. Plaintiffs have been damaged as a proximate result of Defendant's violations of the CPA and have suffered actual, ascertainable losses by foregoing income in order to pursue a

Doctor of Psychology degree from Antioch University and by incurring significant student loan debt.

126. As a direct and proximate result of Defendant's violations of the CPA as set forth above, Plaintiffs have suffered an ascertainable loss and are therefore entitled to relief, including damages, costs, and attorneys' fees.

#### **COUNT II – Breach of Contract**

- 127. The foregoing allegations are incorporated by reference herein.
- 128. The relationship between students and universities is primarily contractual in nature, with the "specific terms to be found in the university bulletin and other publications." *Marquez v. University of Washington*, 32 Wash. App. 302, 305 (1982).
- 129. By admitting the Plaintiffs and accepting their tuition, Antioch created a contract between itself and the Plaintiffs.
- 130. Antioch breached its contract with the Plaintiffs by failing to follow its own procedures and policies of not discriminating "on the basis of race, color, sex, ancestry, national origin" and not "operating any of its programs and activities" in a discriminatory manner.
- 131. As a result of Antioch's breach of contract, the Plaintiffs have been damaged in an amount to be proven at trial.

# **COUNT III – Breach of the Covenant of Good Faith and Fair Dealing**

- 132. The foregoing allegations are incorporated by reference herein.
- 133. Under Washington common law, "[t]here is in every contract an implied duty of good faith and fair dealing" that "obligates the parties to cooperate with each other so that each may obtain the full benefit of performance." *Rekhter v. Dept. of Social and Health Services*, 180 Wash.2d 102, 112 (2014) (internal citations and quotation marks omitted).

134. Antioch's various standards, policies, and procedures constitute representations and promises that Antioch expected, or should have reasonably expected, would induce action or forbearance by the plaintiffs.

135. Antioch expected, or should have expected, the Plaintiffs to accept Antioch's offer of admission, to incur tuition and fee expenses, and to choose not to attend other universities based on its express and implied promises, including the implied promise that Antioch would provide the Plaintiffs with transparent standards, academic support, and a fundamentally fair hearing process, should they be accused of a violation of the student handbook and other relevant policies, rules, or regulations.

- 136. The Plaintiffs relied to their detriment on Antioch's express and implied promises and representations.
- 137. As a result of the Defendant's actions, Plaintiffs have suffered loss, damage, and detriment including incidental and consequential damages.

#### **COUNT IV – Fraudulent Misrepresentation**

- 138. The foregoing allegations are incorporated by reference herein.
- 139. In connection with recruiting and marketing the PsyD program at the Seattle campus, Defendant supplied false, misleading, inaccurate, and incomplete information regarding the quality of the education, the university's commitment to diversity and inclusion, and the flexibility of the program to be compatible with the schedule of a working adult.
- 140. Antioch had a duty to disclose to Plaintiffs the actual rigidity and requirements of the program.
- 141. Antioch supplied false, misleading, inaccurate, and incomplete information about the PsyD program.

- 142. Plaintiffs reasonably and justifiably relied on Antioch's misrepresentations and non-disclosures to their detriment.
- 143. Antioch knew, or should have known, that their statements and representations of the PsyD program were inaccurate and that Plaintiffs would reasonably and justifiably rely on Antioch's false misrepresentations and omissions to their detriment.
- 144. As a direct and proximate result of these misrepresentations and concealments, Plaintiffs have suffered actual damages, in an amount to be proven at trial, by enrolling in Antioch University, Seattle's PsyD program, incurring student loan debt to pay for the cost of the program, and ultimately being dismissed from the program prior to receiving their degrees.
- 145. Antioch acted wantonly, intentionally, and with reckless indifference for the rights of Plaintiffs, thereby entitling Plaintiffs to recover punitive damages.

### **COUNT V – Negligent Misrepresentation**

- 146. The foregoing allegations are incorporated by reference herein.
- 147. Antioch had a duty to exercise reasonable care in communicating accurate and complete information about the quality of the education, the university's commitment to diversity and inclusion, and the flexibility of the program to be compatible with the schedule of a working adult.
- 148. Antioch knew, or should have known, that their statements and representations of the PsyD program were inaccurate, because the program did not emphasize racial inclusion, the professors did not support its stated commitment to diversity, and the program was not sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of working adults.
- 149. Antioch failed to exercise reasonable care in communicating accurate and complete information about the quality and true nature of the PsyD program.

- 150. Antioch concealed from Plaintiffs the quality of the education they would be receiving, and supplied false, misleading, inaccurate, and incomplete information about the university's commitment to diversity and inclusion, and the flexibility of the program to be compatible with the schedule of a working adult.
- 151. Plaintiffs reasonably and justifiably relied on Antioch's misrepresentations and non-disclosures to their detriment.
- 152. Antioch knew or should have known that their statements were untrue and inaccurate, and that Plaintiffs would reasonably and justifiably rely on Antioch's false misrepresentations and omissions to their detriment.
- 153. As a direct and proximate result of the misrepresentations and concealments, Plaintiffs have suffered actual damages in an amount to be proven at trial by enrolling in Antioch University, Seattle's PsyD program, incurring student loan debt to pay for the cost of the program, and ultimately being removed from the program prior to receiving their degrees.
  - 154. Plaintiffs are therefore entitled to damages and injunctive relief.

## **COUNT VI – Unjust Enrichment**

- 155. The foregoing allegations are incorporated by reference herein.
- 156. To plead an unjust enrichment claim, a benefit must be conferred by the plaintiffs; to the defendant, the benefit must be received at the plaintiffs' expense, and it must be unjust for the defendant to keep the benefit under the circumstance. *Young v. Young*, 164 Wn.2d 477, 484 (2008); *see also Bailie Commc'ns, Ltd. v. Trend Bus. Sys., Inc.*,61 Wn. App. 151, 160 (1991) ("Unjust enrichment occurs when one retains money or benefits which in justice and equity belong to another.").

157. Plaintiffs have conveyed multiple benefits – most specifically, their tuition money– to the Defendant at their expense; it is unjust for Antioch University to keep the benefits of those services without conveying anything to Plaintiffs.

# **COUNT VII - Race-Based Discrimination pursuant to WLAD**

- 158. The foregoing allegations are incorporated by reference herein.
- Against Discrimination (WLAD), RCW 49.60.030 which prohibits discrimination based on "race, creed, color, national origin, [and] sex" among other factors. "The right to be free from discrimination" includes "[t]he right to the full enjoyment of any of the accommodations, advantages, facilities, or privileges of any place of public resort, accommodation, assemblage, or amusement." *Id. accord* RCW 49.60.215. The WLAD statute applies to any person or entity who offers "the sale of goods, merchandise, services, or personal property, or for the rendering of personal services." RCW 49.60.040(2).
- 160. The Defendant sells goods and services through its provision of educational opportunities.
  - 161. The Defendant's commercial practices are subjected to the WLAD.
  - 162. Antioch is a place of public accommodation under the WLAD.
- 163. From 2010 through 2017, Antioch University engaged in acts and omissions that constitute racial discrimination on the basis of Dorothy Capers' and Cynthia Winters' status as African-American women.
- 164. In doing so, Defendant deprived Dorothy Capers and Cynthia Winters of the "accommodations, advantages, facilities, or privileges of [a] place of public resort, accommodation, assemblage, or amusement," in violation of RCW 49.60.030(1)(b) and RCW 49.60.215.